

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6449

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PDEV, UK(NI)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION RE-
PORT RECEIVED

1. NI SECRETARY MERLYN REES NOVEMBER 10 TOLD COMMONS THAT HE HAD RECEIVED FINAL REPORT FROM NI CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, THAT IT WILL BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY AND THAT IT WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE COMMONS FOR DEBATE EARLY IN NEXT PARLIAMENT (WHICH CONVENES NOVEMBER 18). REES NOTED THAT CONVENTION HAD COMPLETED ITS SOLE TASK, BUT THAT HE HAD EXERCISED HIS AUTHORITY UNDER LAW TO CONTINUE PAYING DELEGATES SALARIES FOR NEXT SIX MONTHS SO THAT CONVENTION COULD BE RECONVENED, IF NECESSARY. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT NO DECISION TO RECALL THE CONVENTION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN. AVOIDING SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT ON THE REPORT ITSELF REES REVIEWED THE CONVENTION'S MANDATE AND AFFIRMED THAT THE REPORT WOULD BE CONSIDERED CAREFULLY BY GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS CONSTRAINED TO NOTE THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE BRITISH ARMY IN NI BE UNDER THE AONTROL OF ANY BODY OTHER THAN PARLIAMENT.

2. AIREY NEATE, OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN ON NI, ENDORSED

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REES' STATEMENT REGARDING PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OF ARMY

AND INDICATED CONSERVATIVE'S SUPPORT FOR HIS ENTIRE STATEMENT.

3. PRESS REPORTS THAT CONVENTION MAJORITY (READ PROTESTANT UUUC COALITION) DEMANDED THAT NI GOVERNMENT (STORMONT) BE GIVEN CONTROL OVER BRITISH TROOPS IN NI, THUS ACCOUNTING FOR REES' REAFFIRMATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THIS POINT. CONVENTION REPORT IS ALSO SAID TO RECOMMEND, INTER ALIA: THAT STORMONT CONTINUE TO RECEIVE CURRENT 400 MILLION POUND SUBSIDY FROM HM TREASURY ONCE HOME RULE IS REESTABLISHED; THAT NI REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER BE INCREASED FROM 12 TO 20 OR 24 SEATS; AND THAT NI GOVERNMENT RECEIVE POWERS SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH WILL BE GRANTED SCOTTISH AND WELSH ASSEMBLIES UNDER DEVOLUTION. AS HAS BEEN REPORTED FROM BELFAST, CONVENTION MAJORITY REJECTED ANY FORMULA FOR POWERSHARING OR "EMERGENCY COALITION" GOVERNMENT, ONLY HOLDING OUT WATCHDOG COMMITTEE ROLE FOR PARTIES OUTSIDE UUUC COALITION.

4. COMMENT: NI OFFICE BELIEVES THAT CONVENTION REPORT CONTAINS NUMEROUS POSITIVE POINTS WHICH CAN BE USED AS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR FURTHER ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN TWO COMMUNITIES. ACCORDINGLY, WE ANTICIPATE GOVERNMENT WILL STUDY REPORT CLOSELY, AND RECOMMEND THAT COMMONS ONLY REJECT SELECTED PORTIONS OF REPORT (E.G., LIMITED ROLE FOR MINORITY PARTIES), WHILE APPROVING OTHER PORTIONS, AND THAT CONVENTION WILL BE RECONVENED. WE WILL FORWARD COPIES OF REPORT WHEN PUBLISHED.

RICHARDSON

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